

TITLE OF INVENTIONProcess for the Production of Electrical Steel Sheet Cores

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to a process for the production of electrical steel sheet cores for use in electrical equipment involving the use of an adhesion coat for the electrical steel sheet.

Production of the magnetisable cores of electrical equipment, such as transformers, generators and motors, involves stacking individual metal sheets to form a solid core. Before this stacking process, the mutually electrically insulated electrical steel sheets are stamped out as segments from a continuous electrical steel strip. The metal sheets are clipped, riveted, screwed or welded together. So that ideal magnetic properties are still obtained after the above-stated thermal and mechanical stresses, these sheet metal stacks are subsequently annealed. The steel sheets are electrically insulated by using coating materials which may consist of inorganic and organic film formers. According to AT-409378, said materials may, for example, contain organo-metallic titanium and silicon compounds together with the film formers in order to improve annealing resistance and increase insulation resistance.

Stoving enamels (enamels or coating compositions that require baking at an elevated temperature) are also used as an alternative technology to bond the individual electrical steel sheets together as well as to provide electrical insulation. The coated sheets may be stoved (baked) by hot pressing.

Normally, stoving enamels with a relatively high solvent content are used. However, environmental and safety concerns dictate that new products, in particular stoving enamels, be developed that have a minimum content of high-volatile solvents. Such new products should have an aqueous base. A number of components are necessary to obtain the properties that

are demanded of such products, like having acceptable application properties at high enamelling speed, good adhesion, good chemical stability, good mechanical properties, high surface insulation resistance, at the lowest possible solvent content.

- 5       US 5,500,461 and US 5,500,462 relate to stable aqueous epoxy resin dispersions which contain micronized dicyandiamide as the curing agent and a reactive surface-active agent. The dispersions are suitable for coating the most varied kinds of substrates. These compositions generally are not useful for electrical steel sheets which demand a high level of specific properties,  
10      such as high corrosion resistance and high resoftening temperatures, as are required for use in electrical motors and transformers.

- JP 11-193 475 and JP 11-193 476 describe a method for the production of electrical sheets for the production of sheet metal stacks using aqueous epoxy resin systems containing a specific phenolic resin of  
15      Resoltype as crosslinking agent as well as dicyandimide as an additional component. The crosslinking is carried out by polycondensation of the epoxide with the phenolic resin. The coatings are intended to provide elevated adhesion and corrosion resistance on exposure to elevated temperatures.

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#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- This invention provides a process for the production of electrical steel sheet cores which makes the production of the cores straightforward by the use of an aqueous adhesion coat with a reduced content of additional  
25      components while ensuring excellent self-adhesion, corrosion resistance, electrical insulation and high resoftening temperatures of the coating.

The process for the production of electrical steel sheet cores is characterized by a process comprising the following steps:

- a)      applying of at least one coating layer of an aqueous composition onto  
30      the surface of the steel sheet, the composition containing  
A)      100 parts per weight of one or more epoxy resins based on bisphenol-A-type, 100% of solids,

- B) 1 to 25 parts per weight of dicyandiamide,
  - C) 0.1 to 10 parts per weight of additives,
  - D) 0.1 to 120 parts per weight of flow agent and
  - E) 50 to 200 parts per weight of water,
- 5 b) drying the applied layer under increased temperature and  
c) assembling of the coated electrical steel sheets to form a sheet core  
and bonding the sheets with each other by thermal curing of the  
coating.

The process according to the invention makes it possible to produce  
10 electrical steel sheet cores which, when used in electrical equipment such as  
motors and transformers, allow a long service life of said equipment by  
providing excellent self-adhesion of the coating and electrical insulation even  
on exposure to voltage fluctuations. The requirements for good corrosion  
resistance are also fulfilled. High resoftening temperatures and an increased  
15 ability for stamping the coated steel sheets are an essential advantage of the  
coating. By using the composition according to the invention, only a small  
amount of the aqueous composition is lost when the coated sheets are  
pressed together and bond together under the pressure load.

20 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As component A) one or more epoxy resins based on bisphenol A type  
are used, preferably as an aqueous dispersion. The epoxy resin is used in a  
quantity of 40 to 70 wt.% in the aqueous dispersion. The composition A) to E)  
is related to 100 parts per weight of solids of the epoxy resin.

25 The number average molar mass of the epoxy resin is from about 700  
to 5000, the epoxy equivalent weight from about 400 to 6000.

The production of these resins is known from the specialist literature.  
Bisphenol-A is obtained by an acid-catalyzed condensation of acetone with  
phenol. The reaction takes place via a chlorohydrin intermediate chemical  
30 product, e.g., epichlorohydrin, resulting in bisphenol-A-diglycidylether  
(DGEBA). The still existing DGEBA can further react, when mixed with  
Bisphenol-A, to higher-molecular linear polyethers. The higher-molecular

epoxide resins can also be synthetized by means of further processes known by the experts ("taffy" or "one-step" processes).

Other binders than the mentioned epoxy resins are additionally useful in the composition of the process according to the invention, such as

- 5 bisphenol-F-epoxide resins, phenol novolac type epoxy resins, acryl resins, polyamide resins, polyimide resins, polyurethane resins, silicon resins, polyesters, polyolefins, fluoride resins. These are preferably used as aqueous composition in quantities of below 20 wt.%, relative to the composition A) to D).
- 10 Dicyandiamide is used as the component B) as curing agent component in a quantity of 1 to 25 parts per weight, preferably of 2 to 15 parts per weight.

- Micronized dicyandiamide is preferably used. Micronized means that the dicyandiamide has been appropriately processed such that it has an average particle size of between 0.1 and 50 µm, preferably of between 1 and 20 µm. The particle size of the dicyandiamide is particularly preferably no greater than 8 µm, especially no greater than 6 µm.
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- Micronization of dicyandiamide is normally done with a compressed-air mill where the particles are shot by air towards each other and by this process 20 comminute themselves. A classifier facilitates the desired size classification of the particles according to the specification.
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- The addition of additives as component C), such as for example levelling agents, catalysts, pigments and slip additives in a quantity of 0.1 to 25 10 parts per weight makes it possible to optimise the coating system with regard to the quality of the coating, such as, for example, increasing stoving speed and imparting colour.

As component D) flow agents are used in a quantity of 0.1 to 120 parts per weight, preferably of 2 to 70 parts per weight. Organic solvents and polyglycol are usable as flow agents. Preferably, polyglycol is used.

- 30 By adding one or more monomeric organo-metallic compounds, such as ortho-titanic or -zirconic acid esters, it is furthermore possible to optimise the range of properties of the coating composition.

Fillers in a quantity of below 30 wt.%, relative to the composition A) to D) are additionally usable.

- The composition according to the invention may be produced by simply mixing the individual components together. For example, it is possible to
- 5 produce an epoxy dispersion by mixing the epoxy resin with water. The dicyandiamide and the further components are then added, for example with stirring, to produce a stable dispersion, optionally with input of heat and dispersing agents.

Water is added in a quantity such that a solids content of 30 to 60% is

10 obtained for the finished composition.

Application of the composition by the process according to the invention proceeds in known manner, e.g., by spraying or dip coating onto one or both sides of the electrical steel sheet surface as one or more layers to layer thicknesses of 1 to 20 µm, preferably 2 to 12 µm, particularly preferred 3

15 to 8 µm per layer.

The surface of the electrical steel sheet may here be coated or uncoated, pretreated or unpretreated. The sheets may be pretreated, for example by washing, in order to remove soiling, grease deposits. Preferred untreated and uncoated electrical steel sheets are used, coated by the

20 process according to the invention, preferably by a one-layer-coating.

Drying of the coating is effected as physical drying process at temperatures causing a PMT (peak metal temperature) in the range of 230 to 260°C. The dry film forms a so-called protective layer thereby maintaining the active state of the coating. This means that the curing of the coating, i.e., the

25 chemical crosslinking has not taken place. In this condition, the coated steel sheet is stable in storage.

After the drying process, parts can be stamped out of the coated steel sheet and can then be stacked. By the supply of heat and pressure, the coating of the individual sheets bonds together and cures, preferably at

30 temperatures from 100 to 300°C and at a pressure of 1.0 to 6.0 N/mm<sup>2</sup> during a fixed time period. The necessary heat can be supplied for example in an oven, by means of induced heat, IR-radiation or hot air.

- Bonding of the coated electrical steel sheets can be effected in different manners. It is possible to bond sheets having a dry coating (active state) together with uncoated sheets. Furthermore, only sheets with a dried coating can be bonded together, and furthermore, sheets with a dry coating can be
- 5 used together with sheets having a cured coating (passive state).

After the process according to the invention has been finished, the coating shows a passive state that means the chemical crosslinking reaction is completed.

- The process according to the invention makes it possible to ensure a
- 10 long service life of electrical equipment, such as motors and transformers, by providing excellent self-adhesion of the coating and outstanding resistance to voltage fluctuations as well as high resoftening temperatures.

### EXAMPLES

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#### Example 1

##### Manufacture of coatings according to the invention

- As binding agent, an aqueous dispersion is used consisting of epoxide resin with a solid content of 51 to 55% and 7% of 1-methoxy-2-propanol and <3% benzyl alcohol. As curing agent, a micronized dicyandiamide is used. Add 2 parts per weight of the lubricant BYK-341 and 12 parts per weight of diethylene glycol monobutylether. The mixture is stirred until it becomes homogeneous.

- 25 The compound is applied to the electrical steel sheet by spraying and dried until the active state thereby reaching a PMT (peak metal temperature) of 250°C. Subsequently, the sheets are cut to a certain size and bonded together as stacks for 90 min. at a pressure of 3 N/mm<sup>2</sup> and a PMT of 200°C. The glue adhesion is measured according to DIN EN 1464.

- 30 The resoftening temperature (RT) is the temperature where a tensile strength (DIN 53283) of at least 25% of the tensile strength at room temperature is given.

The salt spray test is measured according to DIN EN ISO 7253. The evaluation of the test sheets is effected according to ISO 4628.

Table 1

No	Epoxy resin (100 % solids) [parts per weight]	Dicyandi- amide [parts per weight]	Layer thickness [µm]	Bonding/Curing conditions		Glue adhesion DIN EN 1464 [N/mm]	RT [°C]	Salt spray test DIN ISO 7253 ISO 4628
				Temperature [°C]	Time period [min]			
1	100	1	4	200	90	6	140	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =1 mm
2	100	3	4	200	90	8	145	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =0 mm
3	100	4	4	200	90	> 9	150	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =0 mm
4	100	5	4	200	90	> 9	150	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =0 mm
5	100	6	4	200	90	> 9	150	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =0 mm
6	100	7	4	200	90	8	155	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =0 mm
7	100	25	4	200	90	6	140	m=0, g=0; Ri=0; W <sub>d</sub> =0 mm

**Example 2****Coating on electrical steel sheet in accordance with the prior art****Table 2**

Composition	Layer thickness [µm]	Tensile strength [N/mm <sup>2</sup> ]	Salt spray test
JP-H11-193475 No. (7)	5	> 16	R <sub>i</sub> = 0 - 1
No. 3	4	>19	m=0, g=0; R <sub>i</sub> = 0; W <sub>d</sub> = 0 mm

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Composition No. (7) according to JP H11-193475 comprises:

- 100 parts per weight (solids) of a water dispersible Bisphenol-A-type epoxy resin and 15 parts per weight (solids) of a phenolic resin based on a reaction product of 1 mol Bisphenol A and 7 mol formaldehyde, the content of 10 methylolated components higher than dimethylolated components is 98.3 wt%, were mixed together with water and stirred to obtain the coating composition with a solids content of the composition of 20 wt.%.

15 The tensile strength and the salt spray test (Table 2) show better results for the composition No. 3 according to the invention than for the composition according to JP-H11-193475.